

Setting the Record Straight

Myths of the 1992 Plan Still Linger

MoDOT is wrestling with its past.

Everyone has something in their past they wish they'd done differently. For MoDOT, that would be the 1992 road and bridge improvement program. The original intent of the program was good — take advantage of new federal money and improve Missouri's transportation system.

But cost estimates were off and projects were grossly under funded. In November 1998, the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission announced that MoDOT would continue working on the projects, but there was no way they could be completed with current funding in the 15-year time frame.

MoDOT did not abandon 1992 plan of road and bridge improvements. The projects are still the basis for the 5-year construction program. In the

past 10 years, the department has awarded more than 2,200 contracts worth more than \$7 billion for projects that were part of the '92 plan. Nearly every project (94 percent) in MoDOT's 5-year construction program is a '92 plan project.

The biggest difference between the original plan and today's construction schedule is the cost of the projects. Ten years ago, legislators and MoDOT planners stretched projected revenues too thin. As a result, MoDOT promised more, and the legislature requested more, than the tax could deliver.

But MoDOT learned from the experience and made changes to its staffing and procedures. The people responsible for the ill-fated plan are no longer with the department. A new management structure and new

auditing processes ensure such miscalculations will not happen again. The cost-estimating process has been improved. In fact, last year's record construction program of \$984 million was delivered within 2 percent of the original estimates.

Today, much of MoDOT's funding is distributed to cities, counties and other state agencies. MoDOT gets only about 60 percent of transportation revenues. In Fiscal Year 2001, the department received 2.3 cents (38 percent) of the 6-cent tax legislators passed as part of the '92 plan (see graph). The increase was phased in over five years, further reducing the total amount of money available. Two audits of the '92 plan have confirmed that there was no misuse of funds.

Accountability

As the public's demand for better roads and bridges has increased, accountability has emerged as one of the most vital and visible issues for the Missouri Department of Transportation.

Accountability for MoDOT means ensuring Missouri gets the most for its transportation dollar. MoDOT must be accountable to the people of Missouri. And it is.

Every project undertaken, every dollar spent and every department activity are open to public scrutiny.



Here are some of the steps that make MoDOT one of the most accountable agencies in state government.

- Public involvement – MoDOT works hard to involve the general public in its projects, plans and activities. From holding public meetings across the state to participating in community events, this involvement is critical to MoDOT's accountability.

- Toll-free number – Answers are always just a phone call

away at 1-888 ASK MODOT. Customer service representatives are available to provide information on any aspect of MoDOT operations.

94 percent of the projects on the department's 5-year Statewide Transportation Improvement Program were part of the '92 Plan.



What really happens to the 6-cent fuel tax*

MoDOT receives less than half

MoDOT	2.3 cents	38%
Other State Agencies	1.9 cents	32%
Cities and Counties	1.8 cents	30%

*FY 2001 figures

The department has actually invested more in the '92 plan projects up to this point than original estimates. But with Missouri's 32,000-mile state highway system, that's only about \$220,000 a mile over a 10-year period. To put it in perspective, Illinois invests that much per mile about every 15 months.

MoDOT learned from the missteps of the '92-plan and has moved on. The mistakes of yesterday should not threaten the future of Missouri's transportation system.

- External audits – Each year, MoDOT's finances are reviewed by an independent auditing firm. This year's result was, in the auditor's words, "as good as it gets."
- Internal audits – MoDOT is also reviewed by internal auditors numerous times each year. This allows the department to continually improve operations. About \$7 million has been saved in the past three years as a result of these audits.
- New financial management – In the late '90s MoDOT hired a chief operating officer and chief financial officer, providing more efficient management of the department's budget and resources.
- Inspector General – This position was created in 1999 to investigate allegations of fraud, waste and abuse

of MoDOT resources. These investigations have resulted in more than \$3 million in savings, mainly from external vendors.

- Performance audits – In addition, MoDOT's performance is reviewed both internally and externally to provide an accurate account of its activities. The Missouri state auditor has said that MoDOT is the most audited agency in state government.

Collaboration with the public combined with more involvement from state lawmakers and transportation partners has increased accountability at MoDOT and resulted in better transportation services for citizens across the state. These are only some of the measures the department has taken to maintain the trust and support of Missouri citizens.